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Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

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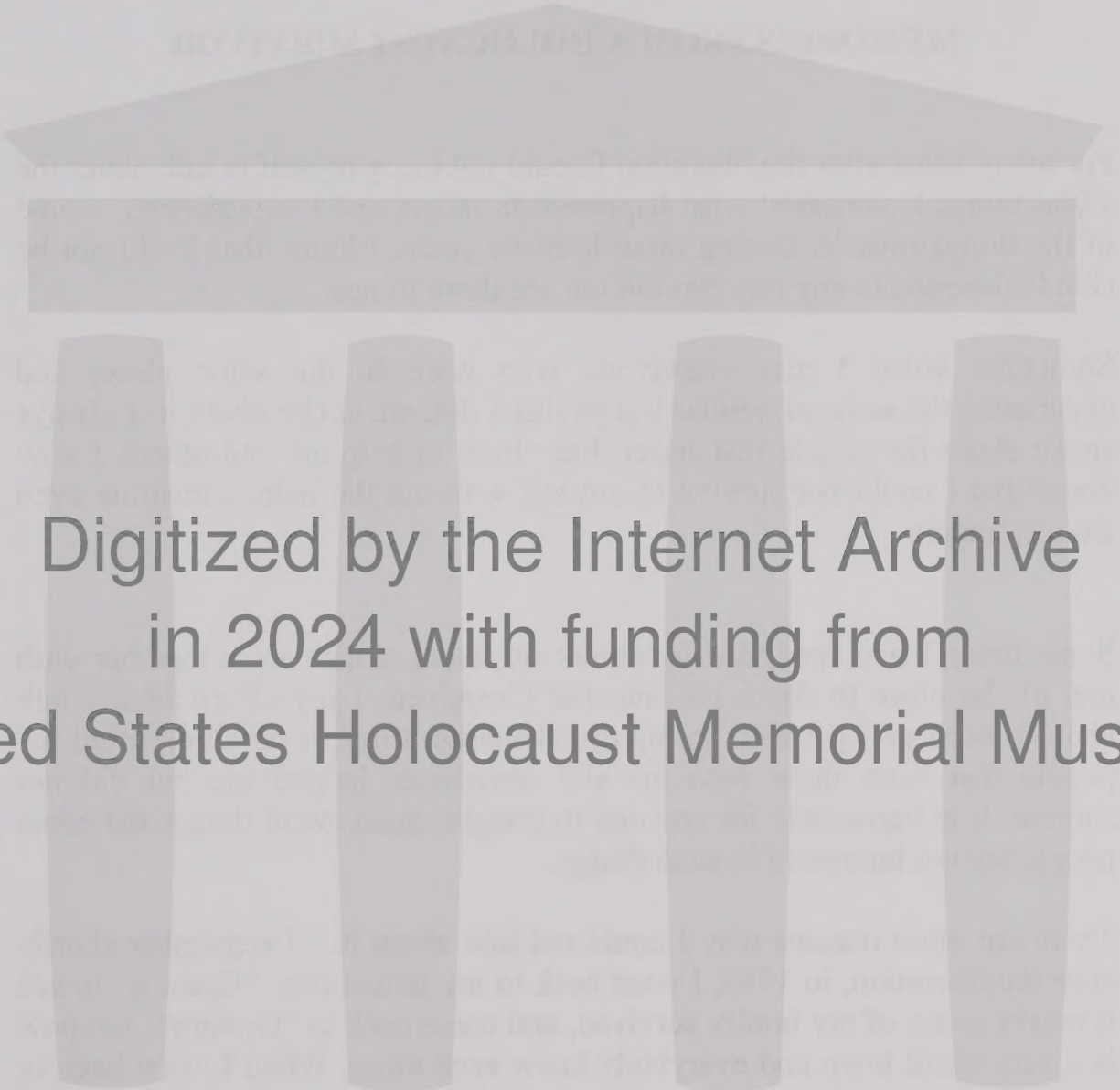
MEMORIES FROM A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

For many years after the liberation I could not bring myself to talk about the awful things I witnessed what happened to others and I experienced some of the things myself. During these horrible years, I know that I will not be able to describe to any one that did not see these things.

Sometime when I meet survivors, who were in the same place, and experience the same or similar things that I did, we spoke about it. I always spoke about the people that risked their lives to help me and others, I now know that I could not survive by myself with out the help, sometime even from strangers.

Some times I was reminded by others survivors, which were together with me, of the close to death beating that I received. I myself could not talk about it because I get tears in my eyes because it makes me think of all the people that were there with me and sometimes helped me but did not survive. It is impossible for any one to imagine such awful things and some people are not interested in such things.

There are more reasons why I could not talk about it. I remember shortly after the liberation, in 1945, I went back to my hometown "Grabow" to see if maybe some of my family survived, and came back to "Grabow". Grabow is a very small town and everybody knew each other. When I came back to Grabow, I was greeted by some of my Christian neighbors with a surprised look, and some time with remarks, " Why did you come back?" we thought all the Jews were dead. Some of those neighbors took over our houses and our lands. One of my neighbors his name was "Binek" he had the only liquor store in town. He had taken over my property already' Then when he saw me he first offered to buy my property and pay for it. But after a couple of days he changed his mind. Other neighbors who took over other Jewish properties in town told him, he could take Jewish properties for free.



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I left "Grabow" shortly after my encounter with the neighbors because I was afraid to stay. There were only a few Jewish survivors that came back to "Grabow" and we all stayed together in one house. After the war it seemed to me that most people forgot it. We the holocaust survivors used to meet on occasions, some monuments where erected and we kept up the yearly memorials. Then in 1981 I went to a holocaust convention in Israel, there I meet survivors from all over the world.

Each day we were taken by bus to different places in Israel, one day on my returned to the hotel from our daily tour as I got off the bus another bus pulled up next to our bus, a gray haired man came out and immediately we recognized each other and we hugged each other he even remembered my Jewish name. I don't remember his name but I know his face he was called "the flager" (male nurse). He was the "male nurse" in our barrack in camp "D" which was a working camp in Birkenau, he helped others and me many times. We were both glad to see each other alive. Then he asked me do you remember when I hide you and your friend in two barrels and covered you up so the SS guard could not find you when they came looking for you? Of cause I remember, I said, I even have nightmares about it, he asked me about my other friend I still don't know if he survived, we where separated sometime after Birkenau on one of the death marches. He kept on telling the stories about how he risked his life to hide us. As he was telling his stories other survivors gathered around us and listen to our story I also remembered more occasions that he saved my life, among the listeners to the stories there were people that know me from other places, but were not in Birkenau with me.

One of the people asked me why didn't you tell me about these things? My reply was I do not talk about it to any body that was not there. It is hard for me to explain, when the "Flager" heard me, he said to me "you have to tell it to every body the whole world has to know about it and never forget it".

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At this moment I remember two other people that said the same thing, First in 1942 what Chaim Shmidt told us just before he was about to be hung "Don't forget what is happening here" and I also remember what my cousin Abraham said to me in 1944 just before one of the selections in Birkenau, now he said to me " Please try to survive, and don't forget and if you survive, tell all the people outside, what is happening here" at the time I did not know if I could survive one more day.

All these memories make me feel now that I should listen to all my friends dead or alive and tell the stories to every body that wants to listen. I know it will still be hard for me to describe such horrible things, but now if I am asked about the number on my arm I tell the people as much as they are willing to hear.

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NOTES

I started to make some notes in the beginning, when they took us away from home to the camps. (Which the Nazis called Juden arbait's lager) Jewish working camp. I was young and naive and thought this trouble will be over soon, and when I get back home, I will tell my friends and relatives that remained home about my experiences in the camps.

But as it turned out, first I lost my notes, and I was almost killed on several occasions, then after years of suffering, and by some coincidence I survived when finally I came back to my home town " Grabow" there was nobody left to tell about my experiences.

All my friends and relatives were dead. In fact all the remaining Jews from "Grabow" and surrounding towns and villages were taken to "Chelmno" and killed there. It seemed to me then that the whole world liked to forget everything that happened to the Jews. This was one of the reasons why I did not talk about it to outsiders for a long time. My memories don't leave me they are with me all the time. My mind is crowded with these memories. Therefore now my writings are not in order as the events happened then. I am writing in hopes that someday somebody and maybe my children and grandchildren will be interested enough to read about this chapter of Jewish history and the holocaust will be remembered for a long time.

It is so painful for me to talk about it and people don't seem to be interested in these things. Sometimes I wish I could forget, but I can't. I am constantly reminded in my nightmares of these horrible events.

It is very hard for me to explain to outsiders the way it happened it is hard for normal people to believe that such things can happen. I only hope that some survivors can explain it better than me.

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I feel I do an injustice to the people that did not survive especially to those people who risked their lives to save others and at the end they did not survive themselves. I recall many times that I was helped sometimes even by strangers. I probably learned from those people who helped me, because later in "Birkenau" I was assigned to a good "working commando" I was able to help other new comers from "Lodz Getto" and Hungarian transport, some of these people even survived and after the war, when they found out that I was alive they came to see me and thanked me.

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Condensed Memories of the beginning, of our troubles

At the time I did not know everything hat was going on in "Grabow" because we where so confined . And because of my age I was not told every thing I can only talk of the things I saw and experienced myself.

Our troubles started right a way, when the Germans marched into "Gradow" on a Saturday afternoon, In the middle of September in 1939.

In the same evening a civilian^{GERMAN} from our town with some German soldiers went through all the houses in town and took out all the young men, my brother was among them, and put the Jews into the synagogue and the Christians onto the church, and kept them overnight. The next morning they marched them to the big prison in " Lenczyca" our county seat, After a few days they came back home..

For a while the Jews had to wear yellow armbands, and later after a short time we had to put yellow stars on our garments. Then the Germans took over all the Jews community buildings in town including the apartments of the Rabbi, and religious personal. They also took over the Jewish business in town, and some Jewish houses.

Then they formed a committee of Jewish elders, they had to be responsible to the German authority for all the Jews. We had to abide by the German laws which gave us curfews More Jewish people were brought in from other towns, We had to put them up in our already crowed living places.

Our family had to share our home with neighbors, their homes like so many other Jewish homes were taken over by Germans. The Jewish elders had to give the Germans a quota of Jewish men to go to work every day. In addition to this some Germans grabbed who ever they could find, regardless of age and take them to work. I remember my first job I was forced to work on a farm together with boys my own age I was not yet thirteen years old. The German in charge of the farm complained, he wished he had older and stronger men to work.

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Then for a long time I was taken to work daily, we were building a road from Grabow to a neighboring town "Dombie" and sometimes we were building other smaller roads., but we came home everyday after work. The rations in the ghetto became smaller, and the hunger became bigger. But we were together with our families and friends we use to meet in private homes. We always had lots of people in my house including relatives and friends. The adults were setting up a makeshift school for the young people, since we were not allowed to go to regular school. A friend of mine and myself managed to get a few books from the library and hide them, before the Germans closed the library. A few friends would come to me to borrow books. I remember for a short time I was happy that I could read romance novels, which my brother and sisters would not let me read before because they thought I was to young.

During the short time I spent in the Ghetto I learnt more about Grabow and the people that lived there then I ever knew previously. Some people also told me stories about my parents, that helped others but never spoke about it.

We endured hard work and hunger in the ghetto. We saw individual killings but we still had hope that all this would be over soon, because we were still together with our families.

Then in June 1941 I was dragged to the town square and I was taken together with my brother and other Jewish young man from "Grabow", to labor camps for the next two years.

Memories of a Holocaust Survivor

" The Day They Took Me Away From My Family "

In early June of 1941, a few days after my 14th birthday, the German authority told the Jewish elders of our town (Grabów) to give them a list of young Jewish men to be sent away to a working camp. The Jewish elders in order to fill the German quota gave them a list of young men starting with the age of 16, my friends and I felt that we were safe from being sent away. But my older brother Issac was on the list, all the people on the list had to report to the town square the following morning.

My mother's uncle " Mordcha " came to our house early in the morning to see how my mother is doing. When he left the house he was beaten up by two Germans, as I was looking through the window I saw my uncle on the ground I rushed out to help him, I can still hear my mother and sister's voices crying and screaming for me to come back, I saw my uncle with blood on him. I tried to pick him up from the ground, at the same time two Germans came over and grabbed me cursing at me, they pulled me over to the town square, which was only two houses away.

I kept on begging and telling them, that my name is not on the list, they pointed to my yellow star on my jacket and they continued to beat and drag me over to the square and put me together with the other people on the list. The square was surrounded by machine guns, and uniformed Germans.

I found my brother and I noticed some more guys, some of them even a little younger than I that were caught in the street and dragged over like me even if their name was not on the list. Now we realized it was easy for the Germans to pick up any Jewish kid on the street, because we all had to wear the yellow Jewish star on our clothes.

We were taken to the county city "Lecyca" we joined up with other people, and among them were my two cousins, " Issac and Abraham " with the same last name as mine. The following day we were taken to the city of "Lodz", where we were loaded on the box trains and shipped off to camps near the city of " Rawich " and my brother my cousins and I together with people from my home town were assigned to a nearby camp "Dornfeld " this was

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my first working camp. For the next few months I was still together with my brother and cousins, my brother-in-law was in the same camp, a few months after my brother-in-law and several other strong guys starved to death because there was not enough food for them to survive by the end of the year I was separated from my brother, he was sent to another camp far away. My two cousins and I were sent to another camp near by which consisted of people from my home town and from "Lencyca".

Most people knew each other and they all know my family. I was among the youngest in this camp, my two cousins looked out for me, they even finished some of the work which the Germans assigned to each of us, before the German guards could notice. I could not always finish the work in time that was assigned to me, because I had wounds on my hands and feet from the cold winter.

For the next two years we were in several camps in the same vicinity and doing almost the same kind of work in these camps we saw many people dieing from hunger, beating and over work.

But the starvation, hard work and beating in "Grabow Getto" and in the working camps still did not prepare us for what was coming when we arrived in "Auschwitz /Birkenau" in the summer of 1943.

I still believed that we were only going to work here.

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Memories of a Holocaust Survivor

On a cloudy day in my second intern camp, in the spring of 1942 I was left only with my two cousins Issac and Abraham. My brother was separated from me in our first camp in December of 1941 and was sent to a different camp. Most of the inmates in my camp were from my town and surrounding towns. The older people in camp knew each other and they all knew my parents, therefore I felt close to some of my fellow prisoners. We were required everyday to work in the fields with a required amount of digging. Since I still had wounds on my frozen hands and feet from the previous cold winter, my cousins would finish my required work before the German guards could notice.

This day we were working on our regular assignment in the fields. Unexpectedly uniformed Germans with opened trucks appeared, and told us we should get on the trucks and that we were going to a circus in town. Then we were driven what seemed to be a short distance to an empty field. As we were ordered off the trucks the first thing I noticed that there were three gallows in the back of the field, at this point we all realized why we were really brought here for. There were already more people from neighboring intern camps there.

Shortly after we were brought to this field even more inmates arrived. We were all forced by the armed guards to form a half circle facing the gallows. At this point we still did not know which of us would be hung until three black cars arrived. From the first car came out two Gestapo men with one beaten up inmate. The prisoner was dragged over to the first gallows. You could hear this person's name being shouted out from other inmates that recognized him.

From the second car two Gestapo's came out with another beaten up inmate. Everybody from our camp recognized this inmate, his name was, Chiam Schmit from my hometown and not much older then myself. He had two older brothers in camp. They were crying, while he was screaming and cursing the Germans in polish and in Yiddish, He screamed to his brothers "Don't forget and take revenge". The Germans were beating and dragging him over to the second gallows. The same thing was done to the third inmate that was taken out from the third vehicle. and being dragged over to the third gallows.

Chiam Schmit was taken away from our camp weeks before. His crime was when he was noticed by a guard coming into camp with a bundle of food which was given to him by friendly Polish people outside the camp. Nobody in camp talked about Chiam's disappearance except for his two older brothers.

Now the Gestapo men told the Germans in charge of each camp to pick two inmates from their camp to do the hanging. From my camp they chose the two brothers of Chiam to hang him. They were both beaten and dragged over to operate that gallows. After such a long time and listening to my friends which were there I still don't know how the following could happen.

I heard the Germans screaming and cursing, I see Chiam falling off the gallows and also cursing and screaming the following, "Do Not forget what is happening here at this moment I see two guys from both ends hanging on the other two gallows. The Germans were beating up Chiam's two brothers. The German in charge of our camp was told to take two other inmates to hang Chiam. At this point the Gestapo men in charge took a loudspeaker and told us in a calm voice "Juden", you can prolong your lives by hard work and obedience to the German laws you can see what will happen if you don't. Then they picked two other men from our camp to hang Chiam.

I hope that people remember the holocaust. Today I still can hear in my nightmares, what Chiam said that day, "Never Forget what happened here". This was only the beginning of my experience in the German camps.

My name was then Hersch Jakubowicz.

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Some of my Memories and My thoughts

After almost 2 years in "Grabow" ghetto having endured starvation, beating, forced labor and individual killings we still hoped this will be over soon, because we were still with our families.

In June of 1941 I was taken for the next two years, together with almost all young Jewish men from "Grabow" to labor camps. In the beginning I was with my brother and two cousins. After a few months we were sent to different camps. I was separated from my brother and remained with my two cousins. Most people in this camp know my parents I was one of the youngest in camp, my cousins looked out for me and helped me whenever they could. We still had hope that we would go home to our families, as soon as the war would be over, because we still received letters from home, but soon the mail stopped, the mood in camp changed.

Then one day I got a post card thinking that it was from my mother. We all got happy for a moment until after I read it I realized it was from my one of my aunts somewhere in France, she informed me that my mother sent her our addresses and asked all my relatives and friends in Belgium, to write to us. Because she is not be allowed to write to us for a while, for a short time I received mail from them I even received a small package from my cousin from Belgium all this stopped very soon. At that time we did not know what was happening.

A day in the summer of 1943 we were told that we are going to a different camp, we were marched to a train station and loaded into box cars, I only remember that it was tight and hot and smelly, we were hungry and thirsty. I do not remember how long we rode, when the train stopped and the car doors were opened, first some dead bodies were taken out.

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I heard shouting and cursing, I saw people in striped uniforms, and I heard the SS screaming heraus, schnell, we were to leave all our belongings and form columns and start marching. I recognized some people from previous labor camps. I tried to stay together with my cousins and people we know. I did not understand what was going on and where I am, then I heard a loud voice from the loudspeaker saying that it is a long march to camp, and because we are coming from working camps, and if anybody feels tired there are trucks available to take us to camp, We were all very tired from the trip so we all ran to the trucks, I wanted to go on the the truck but my cousins stopped me and he said we should stay together because we don't know where we are, Then we marched to the baths for delousing, and were shaved clean from head to toe. Then were taken to another room where we had numbers tattooed on our arms. All this was done by prisons who were there before us. I even recognized a barber, he was from "Lenczyca" a neighboring town from "Grabow".

I do not remember all the names or all the happenings from "Auschwitz", (my mind wonders from time to time) but certain happenings and some names are chiseled in my mind, like my number on my arm. All this remains with me for life.

I remember the same night in a big room with a lot of people surrounded by SS guards, a old time prisoner, appeared and told us his name was "Pinia Esek" his speech started with a few curse words and he told us "You are now in "Auschwitz" ~~here-people~~ here people could survive one month, but by me if you don't behave and listen to me all of you will be dead in the morning".

After all these years I still don't know if he was talking rough, because he wanted to impress the SS around us and show he is tough on the new comers or was he such a mean man enjoying his job? . Whenever I think of it, it appears in front of my eyes, I don't have enough words to describe it.

Some times I feel I do an injustice by leaving out some happenings. But I can't bring myself to think and write these horrible things that I witnessed

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then. But right after the liberation in May 1945 I looked for any survivors in my family. First I went to Grabow I met a handful of Jewish survivors, which were liberated earlier and I also met some Poles in Grabow they told me that they witnessed when the Jews from Grabov were taken to a killing place in the village of "Chemno" and killed there. I kept on looking for more of my relatives and in 1951 from my big family in France. I found only two of my aunts and one cousin in Belgium my uncles and every body else were killed. My aunts also told me they stopped writing to me in 1942 because they had to go in hiding. This is only the beginning of my experiences in Auschwitz.

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A Condensed Version of Some of My Experiences and Thoughts in Auschwitz-Birkenau

I don't know if I will be really able to describe Aushchwitz-Birkenau or all the coincidences that happened to me that helped me to survive, for periods of time. I call them coincidences, because I really don't know how else to refer to them. When I talk about my experiences I see them in front of my eyes, and I see the places and the good people that were there with me. Some times these people and even strangers helped me. That is why it is very difficult for me to describe to outsiders that did not see what happened there. I often wonder how I can explain such horrific experiences. I realize that I must talk about what happened then. So maybe it will help people to remember and this will never be forgotten, or ever happen again to anyone anywhere.

Some people believe it was a miracle for them to survive. I do not want to disagree with those people; they should stick to their beliefs. Some people thought they were stronger and smarter and that they could out smart the Nazis. Some people even thought that when they were put in charge of other prisoners and by showing the Nazis that they were mean to those prisoners, they could save themselves. However, I witnessed smart, strong, righteous and God fearing people being killed or just disappear during those terrible times.

Some of my friends that were with me then and experienced some of the same bad things, say that I usually don't talk about the bad things that happened to me, which is maybe so, but I feel and remember all the bad things that happened to others. I could never forget all the good people I knew then. Some of the people I meet by coincidence, and sometimes helped me to survive for a while. I talk about and remember all the bad things that happened to those good people that sometimes

helped me then to survive. Now I will try to describe my experiences during those horrible times.

Now we start the beginning of my experiences in Aushwitz Birkenau. As soon as the train stopped, and the doors on our boxed car opened, we heard cursing from the SS guards and screaming, "Heraus" "Schnell", then pushing and hitting, if you could not move faster. We were put into columns by prisoners in stripped uniforms.

Then we heard from a loud speaker in a calm voice, telling us that it is along way from the train to camp, who ever feels that he can't walk far if he wants can go on trucks and ride to camp. I wanted to go on the truck, but my cousins Issac and Abraham prevented me from going. They told me if I'm tired they would help me, even if they would have to carry me. They said we don't know where we are, let's stay together as long as we can. I tried to stay close to my cousins and the people I knew as long as I could.

Then our transport marched to camp. Here we got tattooed numbers on our arms and went to the baths for delousing and we got stripped uniforms. Then we marched to the quarantine in Birkenau (or in Aushwitz 2). Birkenau was a big concentration camp made up of several camps, divided by electric barbwire. Here were people from many nations. Almost all the prisoners wore stripped uniforms. I remember only the Russian, (prisoners of war), wore their own military uniforms.

In the quarantine the new arrivals received their insignias, which consisted of a red triangle with a letter for the country they came from. Like a "P" for Poland an "F" for France, ect, and the number below the triangle. Only the Jewish prisoners had an additional yellow triangle to make up a Star of David. There were a few different colors for triangles. Now every prisoner could be identified by his insignia and numbers. The insignias had to be put on the jackets and trousers. It is difficult for me to describe the awful things that happened in Birkenau. Some people walked around like zombies! You could also see walking skeletons; they were called "Muselmans" (a camp expression). Those people usually did not last long; soon they were taken away in the next selection to the crematorium, sometimes together with healthy Jews.

When I came to Birkenau I was already 16 years old and had already almost 4 years of bad experiences, in Grabow ghetto and in labor camps. However I was still naïve and believed that maybe there was still hope for us. All this belief was changed soon, and I realized that I am in a living hell here with not much hope. I don't remember how long I was in the quarantine, probably days. One day I noticed

people running out of the barrack, I followed them, as I came out, I saw opened trucks with screaming women on the trucks passing by the road outside the fence. Until now I did not see any women here I was confused I looked around and noticed a man near me, from his number I knew he was here a long time. I asked him where those women are going to. He looked at my number and pointed and said to me, look maybe you can see smoke from a distance, and those women are going there and will come out in smoke.

I could not believe (or maybe I didn't want to believe). It was too painful, (I had a mother, three sisters, many aunts and cousins). "I pictured them all in my mind, standing on an open truck and being taken away". I said to myself in Yiddish "This is not possible by God". This expression was used by my parents when they could not believe in something. When this man over heard me, then he said to me, you silly boy, Do you know where you are? He asked. You are in Aushwitz, there is no God here, God was afraid of the SS Guards and he ran away from here. For a very short time I could not understand, but soon I found out the truth about Aushwitz.

Later the same day I walked over to the wash-toilet barrack. Here I meet my mothers' cousin Mark. He came with his son, Jurek. We all came to Aushwitz on the same train. I knew Mark all my life, we all lived in Grabow. Mark was a very smart man, he spoke several languages fluently. The Germans even put him in charge of one of the labor camps. He was an optimist, he always told us the war would be over soon and the Germans will lose and we will go home to our families.

When I meet Mark today I did not recognize him. He was crying and he told me he helped his son go on the truck, because he did not want him to have to walk so far to camp. Now he found out that all the people that went on the trucks were taken to the crematoriums. Now he thinks that our families are probably dead and that there is no more hope for us. He was crying and telling me don't believe anything they tell us here. The polite voice from the loud speaker by the train was only to fool us. Our transport was made up of young man, if we knew the truth the Nazis' thought there would be some resistance coming from us. They wanted every thing to go smooth for them. Now when we are in the camp there is not much we can do.

My cousin Abraham, Issac and I were sent from the quarantine barrack to camp 'D' which was a working camp, here we were assigned to barrack 30. Here the Bloceltester was Leon Greenbaum . (The son of Yitchoc Greenbaum, one of two Jewish Senators in the Polish senate). L.G. was a big stocky man, he spoke many languages. He spoke to all the prisoners in their own languages. He survived the war. I remember as we were waiting to be assigned to a working commando this old

time prisoner came over and asked the new comers from which town they came from. When he came to me I told him I came from Grabow. He then said he was in Grabow a long time ago, he had some business with a man and he mentioned my father. I told him this was my father, he looked at me and first he did not believe me. He said I met Mr. Jakubowicz's son and he was much older. I told him this was my older brother who was about 10 years older than me. I told him in beside my brother I also had 3 sisters and I was the youngest. After asking me more questions he finally believed me. He said there is not much I can do for you here, but I know the (Stubenelteste) in barrack 30, they clean the barracks. They also give out tea or coffee in the morning, sometimes they distributed soup in the bread rations. If they like you and if you can help in their work there's always something left.

You got to know this would be additional work to your regular assigned commando, in the morning you help before your regular work and in the evening you help after your work. In this barrack there was one more young boy about my age doing the same thing. Together we were doing what we were told soon we became friends. Here is another coincidence, this young boy and I had the same last name, no relations he was from Galicia, and had red hair. For awhile we also worked together in our regular commando. We got two wheel barrels and we were supposed to gather wood and make a fire by the (bager) like a crane. Here they were building a warehouse and storing potatoes for the camp. Cousin Mark was working close to our job, I saw him almost every day. He was carrying building equipment together with another man that I knew from the labor camp.

I sometimes got some potatoes and roasted them by the fire which we had to keep by the crane. The operator of the (bager) crane was a civilian who would allow us sometimes to roast the potatoes. I use to give some to Cousin Mark. But cousin Mark was still mourning the lose of his son. One day soon he gave up and purposely walked over to the fence, he was ten shot by the guard from the tower.

On our additional job in the morning and evening we sometimes had to bring water from the wash-toilet barrack for the stubeneltester. Once before a selection we took two pails and went for water and remained in the wash-toilet barrack until the selection was over. I remember after the selection when we came back with the water the man that was in charge of the bread rations in our barrack saw us coming back. He was a Poll and he remarked in polish the little Jews cheated the gas chambers again. For a while we were afraid that he would give us away to the Germans. In fact he was looking for us because he wanted us to clean the space where he would store the bread rations

My redhead friend and I were working together for a while. One day after a selection we were both in, we found ourselves in different isles. We looked at each other not saying anything, not knowing which isle was going to the gas chamber and which would remain in camp for a while. Because there were healthy looking men in both isles, I did not know for sure who will remain here, until the other group was taken away. This was the last time I saw my redhead friend. Nothing lasted long here, everything was of short duration.

My Cousins Isaac, Abraham and I were still in the same barrack, but we worked in different commandos. One morning before going to my regular commando I was still gathering together the soup bowls that were scattered all over. It was early in the morning and still dark. My job here was to put the bowls in one place near the door. They were supposed to be washed later by the Stubeneltester. As I put a stack of bowls on the floor they did not stay straight. I put my hand underneath to straighten them out; to my surprise my hand touched something that seemed to be a money coin. I picked it up and run to the apel place, not to be late to my regular job. When I showed the coin to my cousin he assured me it was American \$20 gold piece. He also told me I should keep it on me because my job was in the camp perimeter and I don't have to go thru the gate and be checked every day

I kept the coin for awhile and was afraid to tell any one about it. Meanwhile my cousin Issac was taken away by a selection, my Cousin Abraham was transferred to another barrack. I still had two friends which I knew from the labor camp. They were also friends of my cousins. After my redhead friend was taken away they gave his job to another young boy. We soon became friends. In addition to him I also became friends with a young boy that worked outside the camp. The cappel from the boys' commando was from this boy's home town and they were friends and knew each others families. This friend told me that the cappel was doing some business with civilians outside the camp. For a while I was still afraid to tell him about my gold coin.

One day I told him that I know of a man in a different barrack that I think he has gold coins and he would like to know how much he can get for one. First he said bring the man to my cappel he will sell it for him. I said the guy will be afraid to show it to any cappel. My friend was praising his cappel, he said he was a good guy. I asked my friend then maybe he could find out how much he could get for one piece. The next day I told my friend that the owner of this coin dose not want get involved with any coppo only if we can come to an agreement and he pays out for one pieces then he will trust him and sell him the rest.

My friend then told me, they would bring daily some food and pay out for one coin. I later told them that the man agrees, I agreed because I really didn't know how much I

could get for it. The cappo probably thought that for him it was a good deal, even if he gets only one coin. I was by then hungry for a long time, and I could probably eat the whole thing right away. However I still wanted to share my good fortune with my cousin and my friends. Soon this was about to end. One day when I bought the food to my cousin, I said to him, you told me to tell them that the gold pieces belong to another guy. Now my friend and his cappo still expected me to bring them more gold coins. What should I do now? I asked my cousin. He suggested I should tell them, the man that has the coins was transferred today to a different camp and I lost the contact. They may believe you because this morning the SS guards took people from this barrack, and sent them to what he thinks is a coal mine. That's what I did and I also thought then that they believed me. I found out later different. My cousin also told me then that he does not think that he can survive one more selection, he looked very tired. He also said to me if you survive don't ever forget and tell all the people outside what's going on here. Well I also did not know then if I could survive one more day. This is the last time I saw my cousin Abraham.

In meanwhile I still had my additional work in the barrack. But now after they took away my redhead friend, I got a new friend, another young boy, together we help cleaning the barrack. Soon we became good friends. I told him about how my redhead friend and I hide once in the washroom-toilet barrack before a selection. Now one morning before a selection I suggested to my new friend we should take two pails and go for water. It seemed as part of our job! But this time we were not alone here in the washroom-toilet barrack there were more young boys hiding. Then somebody said he sees a SS guard coming in this direction. We soon scattered all over. My friend told me we should go to barrack 13, this was the Sonder commando. The Sonder commando worked in the crematorium. He then told me that he knows some people there; they are from his home town. The Sonder commando worked in shifts; the night shift could stay or sleep in the barrack in the day time. One of his friends let us in, and in meanwhile we hide under the bunks. We were then told that we could not stay here long. After we rested and the people that my friend knew had to go to work, we tried to go back to our barrack. Here we noticed the flager (male nurse), and his helper was staying near the entrance to the barrack.

The flager was a decent man, he saved me before, when I was once hit (I believe that I was hit this time by a blockeltester) because I was late to the apel (assembly line) He the flager then pushed me aside and stopped my bleeding, he bandaged me and sent me back to work. This was not the only time he helped me. Now when I saw him I asked him to help us. He thought for a minute and said to himself, this is very dangerous, he thought and he was right, that we are some of the boys that ran away from the wash-toilet that the SS guards were looking for.

Well he did not wait long; he saw some big barrels standing a short distance away from the barracks. The barrels smelled very bad, you could smell them from a distance. The SS guards would not go close to them. The flager and his helper took us and put us in two barrels and covered them up. I remember it was very sticky and smelly inside. After the SS guards started to look in a different part of the camp the flager took us out from the barrels and we went back into our barrack. That's how the flager saved us for a while again.

The flager survived, we meet by coincidence long after the war. In 1981 I went to a holocaust gathering to Israel. By coincidence I meet the flager there.

We were very happy to see each other alive. We remembered how he hide my friend and me in two barrels and saved us for a while. I reminded him about the other instances when he helped me and others.

The flagers helper I meet once more later. I remember his name was David, he was from Greece. I meet him once more after Birkenau when I was with what we call the Death March, and my column stopped in a concentration camp called the (Celt tent). I don't know if he survived.

I would like to mention now that in 1950 by coincidence I meet this friend that negotiated the coin deal in Birkenau. After we spoke about our liberation, and who we meet from Birkenau since then. He then said to me "You had then more luck then brains, the cappo did not believe you, and he wanted to beat you until you would give him the rest of the coins" and I begged him and told him that if you have more coins you would give them to me because you trust me. That's why he left you alone. I told him then that I did not have more then one coin and how I found it.

I remember my cousin Abraham told me then (now I think he was right) the cappo then wanted to keep everything quiet so that no one would suspect him that he is dealing with civilians outside the camp.

In Birkenau things were changing very fast, and sometimes it was confusing to me. I now recall the last selection I was in. It was conducted inside the barracks. Here I saw many young and healthy men on both sides of the isle. I saw Leon Greenbaum standing in this selection. He was no longer blockeltester. I don't think that I can express all the details correctly that happened then, it was very confusing to me. Even after the selection this time I wasn't sure if I was on the right side.

Now I think it was the spring of 1944, they were expanding the Ofroumungs (cleaning up) commando it was called by the prisoners the Canada commando (maybe because this commando was considered one of the better commandos). It was expanded because they were expecting people from Hungry and from the Lodzer ghetto. One of the Canada commandos' jobs was, to empty out the train after the new arrivals. Here when people came they sometimes brought with them some valuables or some food and this commando could sometimes find things when they cleaned out the train.

Now again one of the coincidences that I talk about, I don't know that I can explain why I was picked for the Canada commando. Sometimes I thought of people that could have given my number to this commando but I'm not sure because it was confusing times. In any case the new people that were attached to this commando were sent to barrack 22. The blockeltesters' name in block 22 was Rosen. He was a Slavic Jew. Some of the old timers that were in this commando longer spoke French and Yiddish. I first thought that one of my uncles from France was here. But I could not find any relatives here. I found out after the war that one of my uncles from France was in Birkenau but was killed before I came here. These prisoners were here a long time. As I recall some of their numbers were in the 42,000 range.

In barrack 22 I made new friends. I was picked with 2 other young boys also new comers to this commando; we were assigned to a top bunk. We worked together and we soon became friends. One of the boys was named David Sroka he was from the town of Sdunska-Wola. The other boys name was Cesiek he came from Kolo a neighboring town from Grabow. I know now that Birkenau was the one camp that I spent more time then any other camp and the Canada commando was the longest time I spent in one working place. One night we heard screaming and crying from the camp next to us. The camp was for Gypsies and their families. This night they took them all away and sent them to the crematorium. We heard rumors later that a German cappo saved a gypsy girl and hide her for a while, (she was supposed to be his girlfriend).

A short while after the gypsy camp was emptied we were transferred to the so called gypsy camp. From here we still did the same work. We were always by the trains awaiting new arrivals. When I worked by the train I felt for the people that came here and when they saw us in striped uniforms. I remember how I felt just a few months ago when I came here and I saw men in stripped uniforms. We were not supposed to tell them anything just to see to it that the trains were emptied and to help the people to form columns. We then had to take all the packages left on the trains and load them on trucks. The trucks went to different barracks. There they were sorted by other prisoners

under the watchful eye of the guards and cappsos. There is so much to talk about Birkenau; I don't know exactly how to explain because one story overlaps the next one. They are mixed in sometimes together. It is probably because I don't like to leave out anything and anybody, but it looks like I will have to. Maybe some survivor will tell it all.

We were not supposed to tell the new arrivals about anything that was going on here. But when we had a chance to tell them anything they did not believe it. Some of us try when we could tell them how to behave when they get in front of the line, they should not run together with older people when they are being separated, because they can not help any body here. Try to go with healthy young people don't go with your old folks you can not help them. In the Canada commando there were two young Hungarian brothers that came here earlier. We became friends, they were trying to teach me Hungarian and I taught them Polish. They were from a part of Hungary that belonged to Czechoslovakia before the war.

Then when the Lodzer ghetto start coming I became even more involved. I had some family in Lodz, and I was going to school in Lodz for one year before the war. I later found out that after we left Grabow, some families from Grabow were taken to lodz Ghetto. I then looked for and found some people from Grabow coming from lodz. I will write later about some people I meet and was able to help.

A Short version of my memories of my liberation

We were liberated on May 08, 1945 in Theresenstad. Then I thought that we were the only Jews left but the liberators gave some hope to us. It took us a while to believe that we are really free and that we could go home. Many things happened to me at Theresenstad. My best friend Motek and I meet with a few young boys, that we became friendly with, on the way going to and in Theresenstad

When we spoke, the question came up "Why we were imprisoned for so many years?" We were all very young and none of us ever committed any crimes. The only crime was that we were born Jews. We then decided that as soon as we can, we would first go back to our hometowns and look if any one of our families survived. We also tried to help other survivors as much as we were able to. Motek and I first went to his hometown "Klodawa" where he found his only surviving aunt "Yadzia". Then I went to my hometown "Grabow" which is a neighboring town from "Klodawa". In "Grabow" I meet only a few Jewish survivors, none of my family survived.

Motek and I made up to meet in the city of "Lodz". In Lodz we joined a Zionist youth group. There we volunteered to help others survivors. Motek and I remained good friends for life. We came to the USA in 1949.

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.Friends

Motek and I were in the same group of camps. We probably saw each other before, on the death marches. These were confused times, we could not pay attention to our surroundings; we were oblivious to what was going on around us. We lived from minute to minute, not knowing what the next minute will bring. Sometimes we found ourselves on a train, most of the time we were marching from camp to camp.

People were shot by the guards, if they were not able to keep up with the marching column. We were exhausted and hungry and thirsty, there was no food on the road. Some people gave up all together they just laid down on the way and were shot by the guards, and pushed off the road.

I think that I only survived those days because. Our column sometime stopped over at working camps for a short time. We were then put to work and sometimes got small food rations.

I will not be able to give more detailed information about these marches I don't think I can describe it more. I only hope there are more survivors from those awful times maybe they will remember better than I can, and be able to describe it better. I also know that there were several groups of "Death Marchers", maybe they had different experiences.

Motek and I really got to know each other, starting on the open wagon train, and then going to Theresenstad. In Theresenstad we were assigned to the same barrack, it was called "The Hamberger Caserne", when we had a chance to speak to each other, we found out that we had much in common, first we were close in age, we came from neighboring towns, Motek even knew my uncle and his entire family from his home town "Klodawa". We later found out that our family and friends were all killed in the same place "Chelmno".

Soon we became close friends we shared the very little things we then had, and the sharing and friendship remained for many years. People took us for brothers. After the liberation and when we were allowed to leave "Theresenstade" we went back to our home towns. In our home towns we realized there is no place for us. Our former neighbors took over our homes and properties when we came back they let us know they did not expect us to survive and come back. After such a friendly welcome we were afraid to stay. We then went to the city of Lodz and joined a Zionist youth group. After a short while being in this group we volunteered to work in the "Bricha"

In the "Bricha" we helped Jewish holocaust survivors, cross from the eastern part of Europe to the west, on the way going to (Which was at that time called Palestine) to build a Jewish State, where all the Jews will be accepted to live in peace

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A Continuation of Some of My Experiences
and Thoughts
in Aushwitz-Birkenau

I will not be able to describe everything or talk about everybody that I know in Birkenau. It was too big of a camp and too much going on there. I remember almost everything from those awful times. But first I will try to talk about some of the things I witnessed myself. It will still be difficult for me to describe it exactly. Maybe I could describe it better if I had a bigger vocabulary. I was not important, I was only a regular inmate, and because of many coincidences that happened to me that I remained alive. I did not know everything that was going on in Birkenau we the regular inmates were only trying to survive one day at a time. But sometimes again I meet people by coincidence that helped me again to survive for a while, usually it did not last a long time until some thing else happened.

We did not get our information from a regular newspaper in Birkenau. But many rumors were going around in camp, most of them were true. Like when we heard from the old timers about the Sonder commando, this commando worked in the crematoriums. When the Nazis started to use the crematorium the Sonder commando was killed every six months and was replaced with new people to work in the Sonder commando. The Nazis did not want to have live witnesses to their crimes. But now it looks like they don't care, they think they will kill us all anyway, they only need a little

more time. Lucky for us they did not have enough time to kill us all. But they killed almost all the Jews in Europe.

You can find here all kind of people! One day I saw in the washroom barrack a man from Lodz, I don't know if he was a poet or a songwriter. He was now chanting about the Lodzer ghetto and the people in the ghetto. A few days later he made up verses about the toilet barrack in Birkenau, and the people in it. I still remember one of the verses in Yiddish that he made up, I don't know if he survived the war, I did not see him anymore after I left camp "D" and was transferred with the Canada commando, to the gypsy camp. In my last selection in Birkenau that I was in, there was also Leon Greenbaum in it too. I saw Leon Greenbaum once more after this selection. As I mentioned before Leon Greenbaum was my first Blokeltester in camp "D". Now he was no longer Blokeltester, he was in charge of some commando. I heard him give orders with authority to other prisoners. And to do so he had to be a cappo or a Forarbeiter (foreman). I know that he survived the war. I will talk about him later. There is a very interesting story about him but all this happened after the war. This story will probably be interesting for Jewish historians when they study the Jewish holocaust.

In the Canada (Ofromungs) commando, we had two cappos, one was a German from Austria, his name was Fritz, the other one was Jewish from Poland, and he had a younger brother in our commando. I also remember three foremans (Forarbeiters) one was named Hanz he was Jewish and was also from Austria. He must have been friends with the German cappo because the two of them always conversed and used an Austrian dialect. The second foreman was Moniek from Warsaw. The third was "Szyne Murzen" (Negro). He was called Murzen because of his dark complexion and curly hair. I only know that the Jewish cappo, Moniek, and Szyne Murzen survived the war. I meet them on different occasions after the war. I first meet Moniek by the liberation, we were liberated together in Terasionstat and I did not see him since. Szyne Murzen I saw him in Munich after the war in 1946.

Obviously we were happy to see each other alive; he took me to a place in Munich, to meet people that he did business with. He told them how he risked his life to help me to be able to save other people in Birkenau. And some of the good things he did in Birkenau. These people were not in Birkenau and did not believe it. Well coincidently between those people Szyme did business with in Munich was also my friend Hymie Fisher from Grabow. Hymie Fisher knew me all my life. He also knew some of the people we saved in Birkenau and later survived the Holocaust. Now Szyme was happy and received the honor he deserved.

About The Jewish cappo from the Canada commando that had a younger brother, in the Canada commando I only heard that he is alive. When shortly after the war, I received a summons to appear as a witness in a Jewish court (Bait-din) in Munich. As a witness for a man, from the Canada commando. This man claimed that the cappo beat him so bad in Birkenau and that he broke his leg. Well I saw many times this cappo screaming and hitting people, but with a clear conscience I could not remember him hitting me hard, maybe I was so use to the mistreatment then, by the people in charge, that I didn't think of it as unusual. I went to Munich anyway and spoke to the injured man, and saw the way he was limping; he looked like he was still in pain. His leg never grow back correctly. I don't know if he could have his leg corrected or he will be crippled all his life. I also then met in Munich, David my friend from the Canada commando. He then told me that he was also called as a witness. In the same case. David also told me something that made me very sad. He told me that from his whole big family from before the war he has only one cousin left, a young girl.

He also told me, that shortly after the liberation his cousin met this man and they later got married without her knowing that he was a cappo. Today she came to David crying and begging him not to bear witness against her husband. This case was later dismissed because of lack of eyewitnesses. This was another Jewish tragedy. Some of those things happened to the holocaust survivors even after the liberation.

To be assigned to the Canada commando in Birkenau was a very good thing, but for me the first few days in this commando I had some trouble. It looked like I did not know how to handle the good fortune and stay away from trouble. I was thinking then that if my cousin Abraham and Isaac was here I would not get into any trouble. They always helped me, and by their advice I was always led into the correct direction. The first day I went to work in the Canada commando we were working by the train and after the people by the transport marched away from the platform by the train. We were supposed to load on trucks all the baggage left over by the people from the transport. Actually we were not allowed to take anything but it did not look too dangerous to me to hide some food on myself, that people brought with themselves and left on the trains or platform. I was happy to take some food to my friends to barrack 30. However as I came back running to the apple place by my new barrack 22 the Blockelster Rosen saw me running, he came behind me and hit me. I don't know what he hit me with, but he busted my head. The Flager (male nurse) then took me to what looked like a medical dispensary. I was treated by Dr. Reichman, I remember from his insignia that he was Jewish and came from France. He put on some stitches on my head which looked and felt like wires, and he covered it with a big bandage. He told me to wear my prison cap all the time to cover it up. Then he told me to go back to work. He also told me the stitches would dissolve by it self. I don't know if Dr. Reichman survived but I saw Rosen in 1946 in Prague.

When we started work in the Canada commando we first worked in shifts, because the transports were coming day and night. On my first night shifts when we finished our first transport and we were emptying the train I was already tired and thirsty, then I saw one of the guys from our commando drinking from a bottle, which the people from the first transport left on the train. I asked him to let me have some to drink, he gave me the bottle and left and went back to work which is what I should have done too. I was very thirsty and took a big sip not realizing until it was too late for me to find out that it was alcohol. I never had any alcohol before, perhaps with the exception when I got a small sip of sweet wine from my father's kiddish cup years ago. I sat on the floor in the boxcar, and I had my eyes closed, when I

felt pain on my face from a whip that woke me up. It was a SS guard that was checking the box cars to see if they were empty. The train had to be moved to make room for the next transport. I ran out of the train and started putting together packages on the platform. I felt pain on my face from the whip for a long time and still to this day continue to have trouble with one of my eyes. It is still scared. Even my eye doctor wonders what happened to my eye. There will always be a scar on my one eye. This will remain for me one of my memories from Birkenau. for life

Then one day, it must have been when I was working on the night shift, because I was in the barracks. I heard that a transport of people was marching by the road outside the fence. I was curious and ran out of the barrack. Now I saw women marching from the train to camp, they were from the Lodzer ghetto. I heard somebody from the new transport outside the fence is calling my name, I looked up and recognized the Zontac sisters from Grabow. The Zontac family was one of the families that were taking from Grabow to the Lodzer ghetto. I knew them all my life. One at the sisters her name was Frania. She was a friend of one of my sisters, she spent a lot of time in my house. She shouted to me "Is your mother here?" I said "No", not knowing why she asked me, she then started crying and screaming. It developed to a commotion between the women outside the fence. Then I heard shooting from the SS Guards that were guarding the women, they thought that someone told the women something, about the camp. The SS Guard were shooting in our direction, we ran into our barrack.

The next day I found out in which camp they were taken to. I had to bribe a cappo, to be able to go near, but not into the camp. We then conversed over the fence. The Zontac girls asked me if I could bring them kerchiefs for their heads because their hair was shaved off. I later got some Kerchiefs for them and threw it over the fence to them. Frania also told me later, that in the selection by the train they separated them from their mother and little brother, that's why she thought that maybe my mother was here with me. It was very confussing in Auschwitz especially for the new comers. The Zontac sisters survived the war. Monia Zontac lived in Brooklyn; I use to

see her often until she passed away at a young age. Her sister Frania still lives in Montréal, Canada, I see her very seldom.

By now we had many friends that use to come to see us in the Canada commando. One young boy use to come to our barrack often, his name is Isaac Woiciechowsky from Ozorkow. A town between Lodz and Grabow. Soon we all became friends. He told us that his family is in the Lodzer ghetto. Now when people from the Lodzer ghetto start coming he asked us if we could find his family. Which was his father, mother and two sisters, and if their still alive try to help them. My friends and I kept on looking for Isaacs's family. On a warm day in May I was asking around by the people of the transports somebody from the Lodzer transport pointed out to me here is Mr. Woiciechowsky. I saw a man with a long winter coat (Pelc), he had not shaved for a long time and he looked older then he really was. I asked him if he had a son, Isaac. He said, yes, I had a son Isaac, but he was taken away from me a long time ago and I don't know if he is still alive. I told him Isaac is alive, and you will be able to see him, but please listen and do what I tell you now. First take off your backpack and your long coat (Pelc), and throw them on the other packages on the platform. Because as your column is marching to the front they will take everything anyway from you anyway, you can't take anything with you to camp. Here he became insulting he did not believe anything I told him, He thought that I wanted to take his belongings. I then called over my two friends to help me with him, they tried but he would not listen to them either. Now I had to move to make it look for the cappo. like I was working In meanwhile his column was moving to the front as I looked over to him again I saw that his things were taken away from him already, by a cappo or by someone else. I walked over to the foreman, Szymo, I liked him, and he liked me too I thought. Now I told him this was my uncle, please help him to go on the correct side of the selection. Szymo must have had experience with these things before, because he took Isaacs father to the front of the column close to the selection. He used a few insulting curse words speaking loudly in German to make it seem like he was insulting the Jew, he said to him "move faster man", at the same time he pushed Isaacs's father over to the correct side of the selection.

After Szymo saved Isaacs farther, I thought of it many times because he was very calm, and now I thought he did a very risky and brave thing by saving Isaacs farther. I should have realized that Szymo was observing the Nazis by the selection for a long time. He probably thought that some of the Nazis by the selection sometimes don't really care if some Jew is being left over to live another day and then can be used to work meanwhile. As long as everything goes smooth for the Nazis with no disturbance and no suspicion by the people that come here. The Nazis thought that they will kill us all soon anyway, they only needed a little more time. Lucky for us they did not have enough time.

When I saw that Isaacs farther is safe for now, I then walked over to Isaacs farther and asked him about his wife and his two daughters. He looked over to the women's side and he pointed to me there is my wife and one of my daughters. They were already on the wrong side of the selection. He kept on searching with his eyes but could not see his other daughter any more. Now I had to be careful that no SS guard or bad cappo should see me. I had to mix in between the new comers, take the packages from the train and put them together. When the trucks came after the people leave the platform we put them then on trucks. This was one of our jobs here and I had to show to the bad cappos that I am working. I thought this was not to dangerous for me because Szyme the foreman was there with me.

That evening when Isaac came to our barrack, I told him that I found his farther but I could not bring myself to tell him about his mother and sister. Isaac was happy to hear about his farther. As soon as we found out to which camp his farther's transport went to, he then by bribing the cappos was able to change his work for a day and go to work in the camp his farther was in. After he spoke to his farther for a while, he asked his farther about his mother and sisters. His farther then told him, I showed the boy that told me about you, where your mother went with one of your sisters. Isaac realized why I did not tell him about what happened to his mother and sister, he was very thankful to me for saving his farther. We never spoke about it any more because I think it was too painful for them. I soon became friendly with the German cappo who saved the Gypsy girl. He remained the cappo here in the

gypsy camp. Later he helped to get a job in the kitchen in the gypsy camp for Isaacs farther. Isaac later found his other sister in the women's camp; the three of them survived the war.

After the war when Isaac found out that I'm alive, he came to me and took me over to their house. I meet his sister; she was crying and blaming herself, because by the selection in Birkenau she pushed her sister to go with her mother, so that her mother should not be alone. Because her mother had a toothache this day, her face was swollen and bandaged and she looked older then she really was. They all blamed themselves. His farther thought that if he did not spend so much time with me, he could have saved his wife and daughter. Isaac blamed himself for not giving me a hand written letter so his farther would probably believe me then. I told them that nobody could expect them to know then what was going on in Birkenau and such things happened there all the time. The new comers were very confused in Birkenau. They could not have known what was going on in Birkenau therefore they should not blame themselves. I also told them about my two strong cousins I had in Birkenau and they knew everything about the camp and they still could not do anything for themselves and they still went to the gas chambers.

The time that we spent in the Canada commando some of us were trying to help the new comers. However I don't like to talk about it because most of those people did not survive. The transport from the Lodzer ghetto was still coming. One day as the boxed cars opened, and people heard us speaking Yiddish, a woman came off the train and asked me, where are you from young man? I told her from Grabow. Grabow was not far from Lodz. Now another woman heard me mention Grabow and jumped out from the train. We recognized each other right away. This girl was originally from Leczyca. Her family name was Kurtz. The Kurtz family came to Grabow earlier when I was still home. I only know one of the Kurtz sisters because she became friends in Grabow with my sister Chana. She use to come to my house very often. The Kurtz family was also taken from Grabow to the Lodzer ghetto. Today they came to Birkenau, there were only three sisters, one aunt and the aunts son. When they got off the train first I notice the male cousin was

wearing a Jewish policeman's hat from the Lodzer ghetto. First I told him he has to throw away his hat, because in our commando there are some guys from Lodz, and maybe their family was mistreated by the police in the Lodz ghetto. Now these guys may want to take revenge on any policeman and because the police was not liked by anyone here anyway.

I said to the Kurtz girl that I knew from Grabow, listen you are all very young, you should try and hold on to each other, but when you get to the front if they want to separate your aunt from you by the selection let her go. Don't anyone of you even try and go with her. You can't help her you can only hurt yourself. At this point I had already some experience from the Woiciechowsky family but I still wanted to make sure that everybody is safe. I looked for the foreman Szymo again but he was not around, I could not wait because the line was moving. I looked and I saw Moniek near us. He was also one of our foremans in our commando but I didn't know him well, he was a tough guy. I asked him anyway if he could do me a favor. I told him that these people were my aunt and sisters; please see that they are safe. When the column moved on, Moniek walked over to the girls the way I asked him to. The girls' aunt had a small pocketbook and Moniek wanted to take it from her, he was always looking for valuables from the new comers, she told him she wanted to keep it because there are some family pictures in it. He told her that you can't keep anything here but, I'll give them back to your nephew and he'll give it back to you as soon as he finds out which camp you are in. But she did not know me and did not want to give Moniek her pocketbook, however Moniek was a tough guy and he grabbed her pocketbook from her any way. He was always looking for valuables from all the new comers. The girls and their aunt went to the correct side any way. Moniek then came over to me, first he kicked me very hard, and started cursing, and he yelled "you lied to me". He said this couldn't be your aunt she did not even know you, and then he shouted "don't you ever ask me for any favors again". I stayed away from him as much as I could.

The Kurtz sisters later asked me for kerchiefs for their shaved heads, which I was later able to get for them and I threw the kerchiefs over the fence for them. All these girls survived the war. I meet them all in Lodz after the war.

Their aunt wanted to see me and thank me. I went over to their house with my friend from Grabow, Chaskel Schmit. He met the older sister they liked each other. Eventually they fell in love, got married and moved to Haifa, Israel. Chaskel died in the 1980's. I met up with his wife again later in Israel at a Holocaust convention. We reminisced about some of the things we went through, we were laughing about the kerchiefs I threw through the fence, we remembered how dangerous it was then. She was still very grateful for the help she received from me.

Meanwhile in Birkenau the transports were still coming, we still tried to do what we could to help but I don't know of any more people that survived from those days. Now I remember when the people from the train were selected to go to the crematorium, the old timers did not mention crematorium any more they would say this column is material for Kaminskys factory. Kaminsky was the main capper from the crematorium. He was from Bialystock. He was later shot by the Gestapo, they claimed he was planning a revolt in Birkenau. It was true. He was organizing a revolt that happened later in 1944. They were expecting him to be the leader. We were all sorry that he was killed earlier and he could not lead the revolt.

Now we heard rumors that there would be no more selections for the inmates in camp. The only selections that will still be made will be by the train with the new arrivals to Birkenau. Some of us tried to help the new arrivals. But sometimes even if we had a chance to tell them what was going here people did not believe us. We were told by the old timers that once before we came to this commando, there was an uprising by the train when a transport of Jewish women from Belgium arrived and they somehow found out what was going on here. They put up some resistance but this was soon subdued by the armed SS guards and the whole transport was sent to the gas chambers.

We in the Canada (Ofonungs) commando when we spoke about the newcomers as "Them" or "They". I never paid much attention to it before. Now, it could be that as I was getting older and as I started to think for myself. I remember, back home in school, that we the Jewish kids were

referred to by the non Jewish kids as "They" or "Them". Always as a group never as individuals. I felt now when I looked at the people coming out from the train in Birkenau. I see myself, a few months ago when I arrived here. I see all my relatives and friends standing here before a selection and taken away daily in the thousands and being killed. I felt then that I should do everything possible to help. It made me very sad that I could only help a very few and that most of the people here did not survive.

I remember sometimes when we were standing by the train waiting for the next transport to arrive. I hear some of the men from our commando talking. They were usually talking about how and when this whole trouble started for them. Well all this made me think. When did all this trouble start for me? And why am I still here? While so many other good people perished. I did not have an answer for why I am still here. But I remember when this trouble started for me. It actually started the day when the Nazis came into Grabow, in the middle of September 1939. And for me personally it started a few months after the Nazis arrived in Grabow. When at a very young age, some Germans grabbed me in the street together with more Jewish kids and sent us to work. Soon it became a daily routine, until I was forcefully at the age of 14 taken away from my family and sent to my first labor camp. After this every bad thing that happened from then on became a matter of fact for me. I had to obey the people in charge. I was always afraid not to obey the people in charge because I was made to believe that if I do not obey my family or community would be punished. So after this I did not take any chances and tried to stay out of trouble. I did not take any risks. Because all these hardships started at a young age I must have accepted this as a part of my life then and because of some coincidences and some good people I meet then and the help I received from the good people, I am still here.

Now we heard a lot of planes passing by the camp often. We prayed and hoped that they would bomb the trains here. But we heard the bombs falling far away from us. We thought the world gave up on us or we are not worth enough to be bothered with.

I remember what was suppose to be the last transport from the Lodzer ghetto, with this transport came Rumkowsky the Judeneltester from the ghetto. He came with his family and his working staff. The Nazis played a joke on him they told him that he's going to be the Judeneltester of all the Jews in Aushwitz. Then they put them all Rumkowsky, his family and his working staff on a ramp on the platform by the train. The whole Lodzer transport was marched through in front of them It looked like they were sitting on a reviewing stand and the whole Lodzer transport was marching for them to review it. Here is another joke that the Nazis played on Rumkowsky. After the selection was done to the people on the transport, and the transport was finished. Trucks then came and took them all, Rumkowsky, his family, and staff all away to the gas chambers, without selection.

For awhile small transports were still coming to Birkenau from other places. Now some of us were going everyday to barracks where they kept the packages that people brought with them when people came to Aushwitz. And the things that were left in the beds. We had to separate cloths and some other things under the watchful eyes of SS men and SS women. Here were working women and men. We met here three sisters. Their family name is Schlesinger. They came earlier with a Hungarian transports from the town of Beregsaz , Berehovo in Chec . I worked in this commando until I was sent away from Birkenau. The Schlesinger sisters survived the war. I met them all in Brooklyn.

I remember the revolt in Birkenau. I was told the Sonder commando threw the German cappo in the burning oven, and they ignited one of the crematoriums. We could see the smoke coming from there. Some thing unusual was going on, I saw some of the braver prisoners standing on the roof of the barracks, shouting and clapping. I saw the SS men marching out backwards while pointing their guns in our direction. I heard an inmate joking and saying "The SS men are trying to catch the Sonder commando, but they are afraid we will hit them in their back". It was exciting.

Since we did not have any selection in the Canada commando we had a false sense of security that we are safe here and we would be here until the war is over soon. Not to long after the revolt in Birkenau, it was around the end of October or sometime in November of 1944 when we left Birkenau. But now on the way out from Birkenau, we heard new rumors, that because the crematorium in Birkenau was not working anymore we are being brought to a place with a working crematorium and will be killed there. But what we did not know yet was, that in the next few months, most of us would go through such hardships that we would wish we were dead. However we did not have the courage or strength to kill ourselves. This was called the death marches. Most of the people in the death marches did not survive

Together with some people I knew, we marched out of Birkenau. I do not recall how else or how long we traveled; I only remember that we marched into our next camp, "Merzbachtal" by Wistergisdorf.

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Memories of My Liberation and About Therezenstadt

Therezenstadt was a brick walled army camp filled with brick buildings. It was built, before the First World War for the Austrian army. In the Second World War the Nazis made Therezenstadt into a model ghetto, for German and Czechoslovakian Jews. In the later part of the war the Nazis turned the ghetto of Therezenstadt into a concentration camp for Jews, from all over the German occupied Europe. They brought here Jews from other ghettos and from some other concentration camps. Sometimes they took people from Therezenstadt and sent them to other places. I don't know why, but for some reason the Nazis sometimes changed their policies about there Jewish prisoners.

Now after being in Therezenstadt a short time we noticed that the uniformed Nazis disappeared altogether. Now we felt that the war is probably over. However we still did not know who will come here to liberate us. There were all kind of rumors as to who will come here. Every morning people would bring out different flags, to welcome the liberators. Finally on May 8, 1945 the Russian army marched into Therezenstadt and we were liberated.

Now we started to move around the camp more freely. We were looking for anyone we knew. I saw Moniek the foreman from the Canada commando from Birkenau. I also found out that the Lager Capo from Merzbachtal is

here. Here were also a few boys from Merzbachtal, who like me were mistreated by the Lager Capo. Because of the anger we felt against the Lager Capo, we wanted to have the Lager Capo from Merzbachtal to be punished for the bad things he did to us and many others. He still got away with no punishment like so many other bad people. Maybe because the times were so hectic then, and all of us were looking for relatives and friends that were still alive. This mostly occupied our thoughts. This is one of the reasons that many bad people got away with very little or with no punishment at all.

I meet here some more people that I knew in the Canada commando in Birkenau. They now told me when the Canada commando was expanded that somebody in D camp in barrack 30. They were probably friends of my cousins Issac and Abraham and they also knew Rosen the blockelster of barrack 22. Those people gave Rosen some numbers, my number was included, to attach those people to the Canada commando. That's how I got into this commando in Birkenau. (I think the things they tell me now were only rumors) Rosen did not know me personally. If he would have known then, that I was one of the people that he recommended to the Canada commando he probably would not hit me. This was their story. I did not know about it then. They also told me, that Rosen was one of the guys that was then planning to escape from Birkenau. They don't know if he was successful with his escape. Well I think that all this were only rumors. I don't remember all this exactly. I only know that when some body then escaped from Birkenau, usually we the inmates had to stay on the apel place for hours and sometimes the whole night or until they found the people that escaped. Very few people escaped from Birkenau.

I meet here in Therezenstadt Fishel Zalman Rosenkranz and Aron Jaszemsky both of them from Grabow. I also meet here a young boy that I was friendly with in Birkenau. This young boy was always together with a more mature man, I think they were in some way related. Now they told me they were going to England, they knew that this boys' farther is living in England. They have already made contact with his farther through the Red Cross or through some Jewish agency. The boys farther later came here and took them to England.

Now in Therezenstadt after the liberation, you could some times find out through the Red Cross or through some Jewish agency if your relatives in some other country survived the war. Now here were representatives of several countries which registered people to immigrate to those countries. Belgium was one of the countries that registered these people. First I thought maybe I could find my cousin Cesika in Belgium and go there. But my friend Motek and I decided that first we would go to our home towns, and find out if any one of our immediate family survived and came back. After we checked our home towns we would decide what to do. Now in to Therezenstadt came doctors and nurses to examine us. We also took bathes and received civilian clothes.

Now the tragedy continued for the survivors. People still remembered the hunger they suffered for so many years. Now people were getting all the food they could eat. People ate everything they could find even if the food wasn't so clean. Some people over ate and sometimes got sick from it.

One day a Russian army Sergeant, (Starshina) came in to our barrack and asked who speaks German and Russian. If we want we could go with him to town. Motek and I volunteered to go with him. We did not know much Russian but we spoke Polish so we understood a little Russian. He drove us to the nearest town and we started to look for a butcher. He wanted to get meat for the troops. He was in charge of the Russian army's kitchen. We looked around in town and almost all the stores were closed. I believe all the stores were owned by Germans and they were afraid of the Russian army. That's why they kept the stores closed.

We went now from door to door, and we told the inhabitants of the houses in German that they should not be afraid we are only looking for a butcher. We did not see any men here, only women. The men were probably hiding some where. Finally one woman pointed out to us that her next door neighbor was a butcher. We went into this house and we asked the women "Do you have any meat?" First the woman told us that her husband was killed in the war and that there was no meat left. The Russian sergeant did

not believe her. He told us to tell the German woman that if she has any meat she better tell us about it or he will break up her house and search for himself. If he found any meat he would punish her severely, he was very angry at the Germans. She got very scared and took us out from the house to a garage. Here the garage was filled with meat, mostly sausages. We emptied the whole place and loaded every thing into the wagon to take it back to the Russian army. The German woman asked us to leave her some sausages and we finally convinced the Sergeant to leave her some sausages. It took us the most of the day in town to get some of the things that the Russian sergeant wanted for his kitchen. We remained friendly with this sergeant until we left Therezenstadt. He tried to teach us to speak better Russian. Until now we actually spoke to him more Polish then Russian. From that time on he took Motek and I with him as interpreters when ever he went to town.

Motek and I were assigned here in Therezenstadt to what they called "The Hamburger Kaserne" (barrack). We were a group of about 10 or 12 men; our group was staying in two adjoining rooms. When Motek And I came back today from town our two rooms were empty, as well as many other rooms in this Caserne (barrack). We were told that doctors and nurses came today and took everybody to the hospital, to check up because they found typhus on some of the men here. We found out later that most of the men that were taken to the hospital from the "Hamburger Kaserne" died later from typhus. This tragedy continued for the survivors even after the liberation.

Motek and I found out from the doctors and nurses that examined us later, that if we were in the Caserne this day we would have also been taken to the hospital together with the others. We would have maybe been infected with typhus like some of the others that were healthy before they came to the hospital. We were examined again by the medical staff from Therezenstadt. I think the whole medical staff from Therezenstadt was made up of Czechoslovakian and some Russian military doctors. After the liberation we stayed in Therezenstadt probably for a few more weeks, before we left.

Motek, I and some more people that we knew, went by train toward Poland which was our destination. We were finally free and had to decide for our-

selves where to go and what to do. Our train went only as far as the city of Kolo. From here on there was no more train stops to our small hometowns. We would have to get a horse and wagon to take us to our individual small towns.

At the train station I meet a man who was liberated with us together at Therezenstadt, and came with us together on this train to Kolo. Kolo was his birth place and he decided to stay here. He wanted to look for anyone of his family that survived and came back to Kolo. After we spoke at the station I found out that he is one of my distant cousins. He also told me that he was together in the same camp with my brother Isaac. After my brother Isaac and I were separated in Dornfeld, in our first labor camp in December of 1941. In this first labor camp, we were still allowed to write postcards to each other. I do remember that the last postcard that I received from my brother was written to me by somebody that told me then that he is our cousin from Kolo. This cousin told me that my brother asked him at that time to write to me because he was by then already too weak to write anymore. I knew that I had relatives in the city of Kolo but I did not know them. This cousin, whom I just met at the train station in Kolo, was the same cousin that wrote to me then for my brother Isaac. He also told me now that my brother then used to sell his bread rations for cigarettes. As a result of not eating and continuing to smoke he got very weak and developed swollen feet, he could not walk fast enough and he could not do his assigned work. He was soon killed by the Nazis in charge of the camp. I still remember a small part of my brother's address from this camp that he used to write to me in my labor camp. The part of the address of his camp that I remember is actually only one word "REMO". This one word could have been the name of the camp or the name of the town or just a post office somewhere, I don't really remember.

Motek and I made out that first we would look for our families that survived and then we would meet in the city of Lodz. By the train station in Kolo were horses and wagons to rent. Aaron Jastrzemsky from Grabow, Motek and I rented a horse and wagon. We first went to Motek's home town, Klodawa. Here Motek found his aunt Jadzia, that was liberated earlier and

came back to Klodawa. From Klodawa, Aaron Jastrzemsky and I were taken by a farmer to Grabow. In Grabow I did not find any of my relatives and I was told by the Christian neighbors that they were all taken to Chelmno and killed there. Soon Motek and I meet in Lodz and joined a Zionist youth group. Now we spent much time together and spoke about our experiences in the Holocaust. We found out we were in the same or similar camps. Sometimes we were in the same camps at the same time, but at that time we didn't know each other. We agreed we had almost the same experiences during the Holocaust. We now realized that when we arrived in Aushwitz from the so called "Poisner" camps (we called them the Poisner camps because Poisen (Posnian) was the biggest know city in the area). All the camps we were in, were in the jurisdiction of the city of Poisner After we went thru the delousing baths in Aushwitz and got our tattoo numbers on our arms, and received our camp uniforms. My group was sent to Birkenau (Aushwitz 2) My friend Moteks group was sent to the mines of Jawosnia (Aushwitz 3) Obviously my experiences in Birkenau were different then Moteks experiences in Jawosnia. However everything else during these awful years was almost the same. The only thing in Birkenau was that we were always afraid that we would be taken away to the crematorium because we always knew that the crematoriums and gas chambers were right here in Birkenau and we could be taken to them any time.

After Birkenau (Aushwitz 2) I was taken to Merzbachthal. Motek was taken from Jawosnia (Aushwitz 3), to a neighboring and similar camp as Merzbachthal. Moteks camp was called Five Lakes (Five Teichen). After these camps, Motek and I were in the death marches. Sometimes even in the same group of marchers, until we arrived in Therezenstadt.

Now when Motek and I spoke about our families and our experiences we realized that our families were brutally murdered in the same way and in the same place. We were now left all alone. All this and our personal experiences formed a strong bond between us. We shared the little things we then had. We remained very good friends for a long time. When we went to the United States, Motek for some reason went to Denver, and I remained in Europe for a few more months and then came to New York. All our

separation was only done by the Jewish agency that sponsored us and probably had to be approved by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The name of the Jewish agency that sponsored us was "The American Joint Distribution Committee". Motek and I tried for a while to settle in one place, but circumstances again did not allow us. Because Motek in meanwhile got married and soon I was drafted into the US Army during the Korean War. This is how our residences remained apart. However we and our families still remained good friends for life.

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